

THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

This bulletin is published for readers at home and abroad by the Religions Division of the Ministry of Information, London, to elucidate the spiritual issues at stake in the war, and to provide information concerning the British Churches in wartime, as well as their contribution to post-war reconstruction.

Number 258

October 12th, 1944

AMERICAN BISHOPS IN ENGLAND HISTORIC CEREMONY AT CANTERBURY CONVOCATION

In spite of war conditions there are still some opportunities for œcumenical travel and fellowship. The opportunities themselves are reduced but greater interest and publicity attaches to such visits as do take place. At present Britain is entertaining two distinguished representatives of the Protestant Episcopal Church of America, the Rt. Rev. G. Ashton Oldham, Bishop of Albany, and the Rt. Rev. Henry Wise Hobson, Bishop of Southern Ohio. Both are well known in Britain and in Christian œcumenical circles.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY SERMON

Preaching at Westminster Abbey on Sunday, October 8th, Bishop Oldham said:

"Christianity is an historical religion, not simply because it is based upon events that occurred in history, but because it worships a God who directs and controls history, in whose sight the nations are as a drop in a bucket. He can make even the wrath of men to praise Him, and bring seeming evil to a good end.

"His action in history sometimes takes the form of judgment, and certainly our civilization with its materialism, worldliness, its love of ease and comfort, its injustices and iniquities, and general lack of moral purpose was not worthy to survive. In one sense, therefore, this war is a judgment of God upon all mankind.

"But, to-day, I call your attention to another aspect of God's action, viz. that when evil becomes so strong as to threaten to overwhelm the good, God raises up instruments to combat it. Of this the Bible and history afford abundant examples, such as Moses,

David, the prophets, and the Incarnation itself; in secular life, Charles Martel, Washington, Lincoln and others. So, to-day, when the world is threatened with ruin, we find that God has prepared instruments to stand against the demonic powers that would destroy our civilization.

"While not unmindful of other instruments in our numerous Allies, I ask you, to-day, to consider our two countries. England is such an instrument. Into her making has gone the learning of Greece, the law of Rome, the Norseman's fierce liberty, the Norman's culture, and the religion of Jesus. Centuries of struggle, beginning with Alfred the Great, the Shire Moots, through Magna Carta, the Habeas Corpus Act, the Trial by Jury, have produced a breed of men whose devotion to liberty, justice and tolerance is exceeded by none on earth. As says the poet, 'We must be free, or die, who speak the tongue that Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold which Milton held.'

"America is also such an instrument. What is the meaning and purpose of American democracy? For what reason have we become a mighty nation if not to preserve our way of life when it is threatened with destruction. Every belief in the blessings of American freedom, taught to school boys in 150 years, every spark of inventive genius, every inheritance of pioneering spirit, every native skill that has enabled us to turn a sprawling wilderness into a nation of industrial power have prepared us for this day. As said George Washington when he viewed the West from the slopes of the Alleghenies, 'Providence must have laid a heavy responsibility upon a people to whom it had given such grandeur and such hope.'

Distributed by

BRITISH INFORMATION SERVICES

An Agency of The British Government

30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

"Thus England and America are two special instruments of God's creation. No individual, or group of individuals, in either country dragged us into this war. It was inevitable unless we were tamely to lose every precious thing we possess. It was written in the stars. It was God himself laying hold of the instruments of his forging to use for His august purposes. Together with our worthy Allies we shall win this war.

"To win the war and stop is, however, to leave a large part undone. To win the war and go home and wash our hands of this beastly mess may give us some comfort and peace, but at a terrible cost to our successors, for we shall bequeath the legacy of another war to the next generation. The only way to justify the terrible costs of this war in blood and treasure is to achieve a secure and lasting peace.

"In some ways this will be more difficult than winning the war. People will be tired, frustrated, starving amid political and economic chaos. Moreover it will be more difficult for Allies to keep together. Under stress of a common calamity, unity is comparatively easy. When the calamity passes, selfish interests, fault-finding, envy and bickering will creep in.

"At all costs we must remain united after this war, and particularly the English-speaking peoples. Not that we want any Anglo-Saxon dominance! But if England and America with all they have in common cannot remain together then what hope is there of others doing so.

"Together we own one-fourth of the globe, comprise one-fifth of its inhabitants, so can exert a powerful stabilizing influence. Nothing is so important for the welfare of ourselves and of humanity as the continued close and whole-hearted co-operation of the English-speaking peoples."

BISHOP HOBSON'S BROADCAST SERMON

Bishop Hobson preached at St. Mark's, North Audley Street, London, on Sunday, October 8th, at a service attended by both British and Americans. His address was broadcast in the American Forces' network. In the course of his address he said:

"The American people have a deep gratitude toward and a sincere admiration for you, the British people, because they know that the battle you have fought against the onrush of Nazi power, gave us, too, a chance to live on in freedom. They know that during

all these war years you have gone through dire suffering and heavy loss with a magnificently unique patience, courage and faith.

"Since arriving in England by plane a few days ago I have been able, for the first time since the war started, to talk face to face with a number of men who have been at the fighting front during recent days. Certain of those I have seen were in a hospital I visited with one of our American Chaplains. Being with these men has not only made me feel much closer to the war, but has also brought me closer to certain of the conditions and the problems which the people of our two countries and the men in our Armed Forces must face.

"First of all, we must meet our longings to have our men and women in the Armed Forces back home again with a renewed determination to suffer continued separation from those in the Service until we win a complete victory over those who would destroy the values which make life of true worth. The men in the Service, and we on the Home Front, must know that the road ahead leads not to London, or New York, but to Berlin. And at the end of that road there's the next road to Tokyo which will beckon.

"We have of late been facing the great danger of swallowing the poison of false hopes. It's the poison brewed from the silly optimism of the blind and timid in our midst. It's deadly in its effect because it destroys the will to go forward in our job with full loyalty and courage. At this moment, when the pressure against the Nazi is mounting so as to bring the European phase of the war nearer to its climax, it is a time when both our men in the Armed Forces, and the whole population in Britain and America, dare not let down for a moment.

"Unless we are on our guard we are very apt to fool ourselves and those who are in our Forces. Many in England and America are eager to do everything possible to insure that those who return from the war shall have every opportunity to re-establish their lives on the best possible basis. But in spite of all programmes and efforts in which we may engage, it's folly to fool ourselves, or our returning Service men, about the future. These years ahead cannot be made easy for anyone. Society throughout the world has been dislocated to the core. The revolution in human relationships is going to continue. The road ahead is going to be tough for everyone.

"This is no grim prospect for those who hold fast to vision of what life really is as

revealed in the teachings of Christ. For He makes it clear that no victory can be won along an easy road. Life is not primarily concerned with financial security, or jobs, or owning a car. God's gift of life is for those who choose to scale great heights; for those who struggle unafraid against strong enemies; for those who eagerly grapple with hard problems with a spirit of sacrificial service. With the example of those who have laid down their lives in this war before us, we in England and America, and those who will be the returning Service men, must join in a continued warfare against all that is thwarting God's purpose for the welfare of His children anywhere, and strive for the victory which will finally offer all the right to live in peace as free children of God."

CONVOCATION CEREMONY

A great and historic ceremony took place at Westminster on Wednesday, October 11th, when the American Bishops were formally received by the Upper and Lower Houses of the Convocation of Canterbury. A distinguished Chinese visitor, the Rt. Rev. Y. Y. Tsu, Bishop of Kunming, was also present. The visitors were introduced and welcomed by the Lord Bishop of London, the Rt. Rev. G. F. Fisher, D.D., in the absence through illness of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

In introducing the three overseas Bishops, the Bishop of London said: "For the first time in the long history of the Convocation of Canterbury it has invited the presence here, in full Synod, of visitors whom it desires so to greet and to honour, and those visitors are distinguished representatives and official envoys of sister Churches of the Anglican communion overseas. It was the wish of His Grace the President, with the Prolocutor, that I should invite the two representatives of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the U.S.A. here: Dr. Oldham, Bishop of Albany, and Dr. Hobson, Bishop of Southern Ohio. His Grace has asked me to say how deeply disappointed he is not to be able himself to present them to the Synod of Canterbury and how greatly he welcomes the fact that these Bishops who have come on this visit are two intimate personal friends of his own. . . . There is perhaps one reason which makes it not altogether inappropriate that they should be introduced by a Bishop of London for, relatively to the long history of Convocation, it was only the other day that the American Continent was a part of the Diocese of London, and they have only narrowly, by a century or two, escaped being under my jurisdiction. But I am not

sure that it is wise to recall that fact, since the Bishops of London in those days paid, I fear, scant attention to that part of their Diocese. I am deeply touched to think that not infrequently I get letters from Churches in America, celebrating their foundation two hundred or more years ago, asking for a message from the Diocese to which they belonged when founded. Now in these present days these links, reformed after a new pattern are strong indeed between the Church of England and the Protestant Episcopal Church of America, and the war, which has made personal visits and intercourse more difficult has yet been the occasion of the most signal sign of the fellowship which holds us together. We do not forget the great and generous gifts which the Church in America made to our missionary societies to enable them to maintain their work in the strains of war, nor do we forget the constant evidences of sympathy and help which in one way and another we have received all through these war years. For long now our two countries have stood together against the enemies of all that our two peoples hold dear and sacred. We go forward now to victory in the West together; together we shall go on to victory in the East. Then, please God, we shall still go on together to establish among the nations those high principles of brotherhood which your President and our Prime Minister have proclaimed. We welcome you as representatives of our great allies, remembering that upon continuance of our alliance in heart and mind so much depends, but here especially we welcome you as representatives of our sister Church, united to us by the closest and most intimate ties. We have seen much of your people over here; we have seen much of your chaplains; it does us good to see you here among us, and we trust you will take back the assurance of our warm friendship and our unity of spirit with you in the purpose of our Lord and of His Church.

"That same assurance I trust that Bishop Tsu, our other visitor, will also take back from us to his home Church.

"None of us can think of the Church in China or of the country of China without being moved to the deepest sympathy and admiration. On them first, alone and unaided from the West, fell the scourge of pitiless war, with all its awful consequences and every kind of human suffering. Astonishingly, through all these years they have maintained an equal struggle against unequal odds, seeing their own resources for war and their means of life straitening

almost beyond bearing. Help which their Western allies could send was impeded and diminished until reduced to one too slender line of supply. Feeding ever on hope too often deferred. Now that for the oppressed countries of Europe deliverance is at hand, her extremity still remains, and while our enemies retreat, even now in China they advance, and though deliverance is sure we dare not forget what delay will mean to China. Through it all, Christian China (and the influence of Chinese Christians is out of all proportion to their number) has attained high service to its people in the name of Christ and borne high witness to the faith. We should be both humble and proud to receive here to-day a representative of that sister Church, which received its faith from the Church of England, and now in its own right nobly exemplifies that faith in these days of adversity."

The Prolocutor of the Lower House (the Dean of Norwich) also spoke in welcome to the three Bishops.

Bishop Oldham's Speech

Speaking on behalf of Bishop Hobson and himself, Bishop Oldham said:

"It is indeed a signal honour and to us a happy circumstance that our visit here came at a time when Convocation happened to be in session and you most courteously bestowed upon us the honour of addressing you assembled in Convocation. We are aware that this honour is not conferred upon us as individuals, but as representatives of what we call a daughter, and you most generously a sister, Church of the Anglican Communion. I take it that this incident this morning is the outward sign and symbol of the fullest and most complete unity between our respective Churches. That will mean more to the Church in America than any of you perhaps realize. . . ." The Bishop referred to the high proportion of members of the Protestant Episcopal Church in posts of leadership at the moment. He stressed the point that he and Bishop Hobson came not so much as visitors and guests to Convocation, but as members of a family visiting other members of the same family. "How significant it is," said the Bishop, "that great leaders such as President Roosevelt and your leader and others are now feeling the need of something more than human aid. They know vastly more about events than we do, and they must be not only impressed but oppressed by the amazing difficulties ahead, which, humanly speaking, are insoluble." He

quoted a leading economist who had said that a change of heart was essential, and "only religion can give that." "The Spirit comes only from God, and the bearer of that Spirit is His Church, and we hope and pray that God will give through the Church, new courage, new spirit, new power."

Bishop Hobson added a few words on the importance of co-operation between Britain and America in missionary activity.

Bishop Tsu

"It is really a great honour," said Bishop Tsu, "to attend this Convocation of Canterbury and to present on behalf of the Church in China greetings of our Christian people in China; not only our greetings, but also our gratitude to you, to the missionary zeal and to the missionaries who have gone out from your midst, for the inception as well as the fostering of the Church in the Far East. Humanly speaking, we must look back to this country and to the country represented by these two American Bishops as the ancestral home of the Church in China. It is a great privilege to be here and to see the strength and the solidity of the Church in this land. It takes away the sense of loneliness which sometimes we feel who are workers scattered in a missionary field, and makes us realize that we are a part of a great Communion with one Faith, one Lord, one Truth, one Baptism and one God, the Father of us all."

A letter from President Roosevelt to the Archbishop of Canterbury, brought by Bishop Oldham, was read before the assembled Bishops and Proctors by Bishop Oldham. The following is the text of the letter:—

WHITE HOUSE,
WASHINGTON.

September 19th, 1944.

MY DEAR ARCHBISHOP,

The mission which my old friend Bishop Oldham, in whose Diocese I have long worshipped, is undertaking, gives me an opportunity to send you a brief word of greeting.

In these victorious days and in the times to come we need more than ever before, that spiritual strength which is essential to a just and enduring peace. The Church is indeed fortunate to have at this critical time a leader of your strength and understanding.

With warm personal regards and best wishes for success.

Very sincerely yours,
(Signed) FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT.